"The Copper Eskimos are rather open in their natures as a people, but certain individuals displayed considerable cunning. Uloksak was perhaps the most conspicuous example, as the following episode will illustrate. There was a simple-minded old man named Kingodlik who bought a rifle from us in the winter of 1915-16. He kept it inside his hut against the snow wall at the back of his sleeping platform, but at Uloksak's suggestion removed it to the parapet that ran round the outside of the house, where it lay wrapped in an old deerskin coat securely lashed with a stout sealskin thong. One day it disappeared from the parapet. Some one suggested that the dogs must have dragged it away, [232] and, after chewing up the line and the coat, left the rifle buried somewhere beneath the snow; but no traces of torn skin were visible anywhere, nor were there any tracks of the dogs' feet on the parapet. There was every reason therefore to suspect that some one had stolen it, and the evidence pointed to Uloksak, for not only had he suggested that the rifle be kept outside the hut, but he had been heard to remark several times that it was absurd for an old man like Kingodlik to possess a rifle when he did not know how to use it. Moreover, no one else in the settlement was likely to have the audacity to steal anything so valuable as a rifle. The other natives, however, even if they knew, were afraid to say anything, so Kingodlik appealed to me -- he thought 'my compass could tell me where the rifle lay.' It so happened that just at this time Uloksak had been engaged to tell me some folk-lore, on

the agreement that if he proved satisfactory I would give him a .30-30 Winchester rifle in exchange for his .44. That evening, as we sat alone in my tent with only my interpreter Patsy present, I said to him, 'When everyone has gone to bed you take Kingodlik's rifle and put it on my sled.' Uloksak raised his eyebrows, assenting, then a moment afterwards, recollecting himself, he said 'Oh, but I don't know where it is. Probably the dogs have dragged it away and it is buried somewhere under the snow.' I insisted, however, that a great shaman like himself should be able to find it, and said that until it was recovered I would neither trade with the natives nor exchange his rifle. Nothing happened for two days. On the third morning a crowd of Eskimos poured into my tent and woke me up -- the rifle was found. Uloksak, they said, had taken his own rifle that morning to shoot a raven that had been hovering round the camp for several days (ravens are never molested as a rule by these Eskimos). Two other natives followed him, and one of them noticed something dark on the surface of the snow. Thinking it was merely a piece of drift-wood he would have turned back, but Uloksak ran forward and picked it up-- it was the rifle. Of course the explanation was that the dogs had dragged it there when they tore up the coat!

The Copper Eskimo, as a rule, displays very little independence in either thought or action. He follows the multitude, agrees to whatever is said, and reflects the

dance-house as a kind of club. It was probably this instinct, rather than any consideration of increased comfort, that led to the adoption of double and triple houses.

To the imperfect development of personality we may perhaps ascribe the deficiency of the natives in a proper sense of responsibility. For instance, a [233] man will be running ahead of the sled, making the trail for the dogs to follow. A seal-hole attracts his attention, his curiosity gets the better of him, and he turns aside to examine it; or it may be that a deer-track crosses his trail, and he will follow it for a hundred yards or so, even when there is absolutely no prospect of securing the animal. The result is that the dogs become entangled in each other's traces and a fight ensues, in which one or more may be injured. Again the inability of the natives to pursue a logical train of thought finds its counterpart in the lack of consistency in their purposes. A native will decide to spend the summer on Victoria island; but a day or two later he takes a sudden whim and joins a party bound for the Coppermine river.(1) Thus they change their purposes from day to day, and, generally speaking, a plan deferred is a plan lost."

"1. Cf. Stefansson, My Life with the Eskimo, p. 270."

Song No. 20 in this collection lists the chief interests of the Copper Eskimo, and indicates the qualities that he should possess if he is to be a useful member of the community: He should be a good seal-hunter, in order to provide food and fuel for his family during the long dark hours of winter; a good archer and kayaker, to supply them with caribou meat and skins during the summer months; a good fisherman, to furnish them with a reserve stock of dried and frozen trout and salmon during the lean period from October to January; and, last of all, a good singer and dancer, to cheer his fellow-countrymen on tedious winter nights and to contribute toward the entertainment of visitors."

emotions of those around him. Whenever we laughed the Eskimos laughed, and when we smiled they smiled. If a man, overwhelmed by grief, gave vent to his feelings and wept aloud, the natives around him nearly always wept also. Any individualist like Uloksak, therefore, is fairly certain to become a man of note and influence. The easy merging of one man's will in another's makes for the 'tolerance' of Eskimo society, wherein each person may do what he wishes without any interference from the rest. It partly accounts, too, for the ease with which these natives are dominated by Europeans, their pliant natures yielding readily to the aggressiveness of the outsider. Generally speaking they have little strength of character. Even Uloksak, bold as he was, became humble and obsequious when he was confronted with a charge of stealing ammunition and his rifle was held in bond until he should either clear himself or restore the stolen articles. Nanneroak, a native of a rather similar type, carried off a case of pemmican from our station. A sled party pursued him, recovered some of the pemmican, and compelled him to pay two boxes of cartridges for the quantity that he had consumed. The loss of the ammunition was a serious blow, but neither Nanneroak nor his kinsmen had the courage to resist, though they outnumbered the sled party four times over. All this would seem to point to an undeveloped personality. Correspondingly, the gregarious instinct is very strongly marked. It is displayed, for example, in the dances that are held all through the winter, and in the use of the -

1: Jenness--235 (1913-16) 1922 Copper Eskimo
116, 156

"The patience instilled in them by hunting becomes engrained in their very natures and permeates all their social life, so that tolerance and forbearance are two of the most marked features in Eskimo society. Combined with the lack of a proper sense of responsibility it leads only too often to a passive looking-on when an active interference is more called for. Thus the natives will quietly stand by and witness a robbery or a murder without ever raising a finger. It is no concern of theirs, they will say, so why should they interfere?"

11: Stefansson--271 (1908-1912) 1913 Copper Eskimo
116, 565, 156

"The relation of master and man is an unknown thing among them and therefore inconceivable. A promise according to their way of thinking means merely that a man tells you what he feels like doing at that particular moment, and so long as his mind does not change he will be willing to carry out that intention; but whenever he does change his mind there is nothing to be done but to inform you that his mind has been changed, and the explanation is considered satisfactory and the agreement dissolved. Yesterday Kirkpuk had intended to go with me to Banks Island and he had told me so; this morning he intended to go to Bear Lake and accordingly informed me of that fact. The Eskimo individually behaves like a sovereign state. The laws of others do not bind him, and he makes new laws for himself whenever he likes."